



July 29, 2020

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairman, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island House of Representatives

Re: Amendment to H 7171, Article 5 – The Rhode Island Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program (R.I. General Laws § 42-11.4-1, et seq.)

Chairman Abney and Members of the Finance Committee,

As the committee conducts its diligence related to the state's Capital Development Program, we write as a broad coalition – builders, environmentalists, planners and municipalities – in strong support for the provision of general obligation bond funding for the **Rhode Island Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program (RIMIGP)**, as part of the November 2020 ballot initiatives. We commend the legislature for enacting the program into law in 2018, which set up the framework for critical investment in public infrastructure, through a competitive grant program that will catalyze housing and economic development in local communities, consistent with municipal plans and in consideration of environmental concerns.

The RIMIGP is modeled after the extraordinarily successful *MassWorks* program in Massachusetts, which between 2015-2019 invested more than \$456 million into public infrastructure in the Commonwealth through 219 grants to 141 communities, which "have supported the creation of over 14,000 new housing units, tens of thousands of construction and permanent jobs, while also leveraging over \$9.2 billion in private investment," according to the Commonwealth. Adjusting for population, we estimate the \$90 million per year Massachusetts has recently funded to translate to \$15 million per year of investment for Rhode Island.

Therefore, we respectfully request **thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000)** in general obligation bond funding be provided to the RIMIGP as part of the November 2020 ballot initiatives, as well as passage of H 7177, which would allow the program to utilize bond funding. This investment will be paramount to the economic vitality of our local communities and the state of Rhode Island. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Marcantonio
Executive Officer
RI Builders Association

Scott Wolf
Executive Director
Grow Smart RI

Brian Daniels
Executive Director
RI League of Cities & Towns

Lawrence J.F. Taft
Executive Director
Audubon Society of RI

(x) Municipal Infrastructure Grants

\$30,000,000

Provides thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) to the Rhode Island Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program, R.I. General Laws § 42-11.4-1 et seq., to issue competitive grants to municipalities and other public instrumentalities for design, construction, building, land acquisition, rehabilitation, repair, and other improvements to publicly owned infrastructure to support housing and economic development, including but not limited to: sewers, utility extensions, streets, roads, curb-cuts, parking, water-treatment systems, telecommunications systems, transit improvements, and pedestrian ways.